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Talk of 27th Amendment out in the open

• Bilawal reveals consultations between ruling allies on fresh changes • Proposal covers constitutional courts, NFC Award, ECP appointments • PPP's CEC to decide party stance in Nov 6 meeting • NA, Senate sessions set to begin soon • Ministers say consultations underway, but no final draft yet • PTI vows to resist changes 'tooth & nail'

By Syed Irfan Raza

ISLAMABAD: Speculation and debate over a possible 27th Constitutional Amendment reached fever pitch on Monday after the PPP claimed the government had sought its support for the proposed changes to the Constitution.

The development comes as National Assembly and Senate sessions are set to be convened on Tuesday (today) and Wednesday (tomorrow), respectively.

The proposed changes have sparked a nationwide debate, with political parties weighing their positions amid concerns that the move could roll back some powers devolved under the landmark 18th Constitution Amendment.

The opposition PTI has announced its intention to oppose the proposed amendment 'tooth and nail'.

In a post on X (formerly Twitter), he said a PML-N delegation led by the prime minister had sought his and President Zardari's support for the 27th Amendment.

The PPP chief later announced that the party's Central Executive Committee (CEC) would meet on Nov 6 (Thursday) to examine the proposal which, according to him, touches on several issues settled under the 18th Amendment.

A separate PPP statement quoted Mr Bhutto-Zardari as saying that the proposal included setting up constitutional courts, restoring executive magistrates, matters related to the transfer of judges, ending the protection of provincial shares under the National Finance Commission (NFC) Award, and amending

Continued on Page 5

Is this a rollback of 18th Amendment?

ANALYSIS

By Nasir Jamal

THE announcement of plans to undertake a major restructuring of Pakistan's judicial, financial and administrative system has raised concerns across the political spectrum.

Although the ruling coalition had been in talks over the proposed amendment for some time, the X post by Bilawal Bhutto-Zardari on Monday came as a bolt out of the blue for many.

The list of areas the proposed amendment would address is extensive.

It includes the establishment of a federal constitutional court, revival of executive magistracy, transfer of high court judges, removal of protection for the share of provinces in the divisible pool, changes to Article 243 which covers the appointment of services chiefs, the

Continued on Page 8

NFC issues to be taken up by relevant forum: Aurangzeb

• 'Kickstart' meeting to be held later this month • FBR chief puts total income tax gap at Rs1.7tr; claims collection from retailers has increased • Power minister vows shift towards automatic metering, pre-paid billing

By Khaleeq Kiani

ISLAMABAD: Finance Minister Muhammad Aurangzeb on Monday said that discussion on ending the protection of provincial shares in the federal divisible pool resources would take place at the upcoming meeting of the National Finance Commission (NFC).

"The entire discussion will take place at the kickstart meeting of the NFC, which is the [relevant] constitutional forum," he replied at a news conference, when asked about PPP Chairman Bilawal Zardari-Bhutto's statement regarding the removal of protection for provinces over their NFC shares, and the transfer of population and education back to the Centre.

The minister said this meeting would be convened later this month, after being postponed at the last minute due to floods in September.

He did not announce a date for the first NFC meeting, which is tentatively

Continued on Page 8

FOREIGN ministers from UAE, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, Turkiye, Jordan, Indonesia and Qatar stand together for a group photograph during a meeting in Istanbul to discuss efforts for a Gaza peace plan.—AFP

Muslim bloc insists on 'UN mandate for Gaza force'

• Foreign ministers discuss possibility of sending troops • Istanbul moot backs plans for Palestinians to take control of security, governance in besieged enclave • Erdogan says Hamas committed to truce, urges Muslim states to lead reconstruction efforts • FO denounces ceasefire violations, demands Israel's withdrawal from Palestine

ISTANBUL: Foreign ministers from several Muslim states have backed a post-war framework where Palestine's governance and security is ensured by Palestinians, as they stressed the importance of a UN mandate for the proposed task force for stabilisation in Gaza.

Turkiye wants to see a post-war framework for Gaza in which "Palestinians ensure Palestine's governance and security," Foreign Minister Hakan Fidan told reporters after a meeting in Istanbul involving Qatar, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Jordan, Pakistan, Indonesia, and Turkiye.

Brokered by US President Donald Trump, the October 10 ceasefire — which halted two years of continuous bloodshed — has been tested by fresh Israeli strikes in civilians in Gaza.

Mr Fidan said the taskforce that will monitor the Gaza ceasefire under a US-brokered deal needed a mandate defined by the UN Security Council and a framework for legitimacy, on the basis of which countries will decide whether to send soldiers to the enclave.

He said it was crucial that the emerging International Stabilisation Force that will monitor the Gaza ceasefire under Trump's plan, have a "mandate defined by a UN Security Council resolution and a framework for legitimacy".

Washington is currently working with Arab and international partners to decide on the composition of the force, with Turkiye hoping to play a role, despite fierce opposition from Israel. "The countries we've spoken with say they will decide whether to send troops based on ... the ISF's mandate and authority," he said.

It may be noted that top-level consultations are reportedly underway in Pakistan as well over the question of sending troops for the proposed Gaza

Continued on Page 11

Demand to end terror from Afghan soil 'non-negotiable': army

• ISPR chief rejects reports regarding US drone operations • Warns India against 'false flag operation' in deep waters • Says decision to join Gaza peacekeeping force will be made by govt

By Our Staff Reporter

ISLAMABAD: The Pakistan Army on Monday adopted a tougher stance toward the Taliban regime ahead of the next round of talks in Istanbul, declaring that Pakistan's only and non-negotiable demand is an end to terrorism emanating from Afghan territory.

"The conditions that Afghan Taliban keep putting forward are meaningless, what matters is the end of terrorism," said Lt Gen Ahmed Sharif Chaudhry, the military's spokesman, while briefing a group of journalists at Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR).

"Pakistan has a one-point agenda: Afghan soil must not be used against us," he asserted.

Gen Chaudhry's remarks came as Islamabad prepares for the Nov 6 meeting in Turkiye, the next phase of negotiations following last month's six-day talks in Istanbul between Pakistan and the Taliban regime.

Those talks, mediated by Turkiye and Qatar, produced a reaffirmation by both sides to ceasefire agreed in Doha and an agreement on establishing a monitoring and verification mechanism for cross-border terrorism, though implementation details remain unresolved.

Ahead of the upcoming Istanbul talks, Taliban leader Mullah Haibatullah also held consultations with his negotiators, led by Mullah Najib, to deliberate on the next phase of dialogue with Pakistan, according to sources familiar with the discussions in Kandahar.

During his briefing, the military's spokesperson highlighted that operations were underway against terrorists belonging to *Fitna-al-Khawarij* — a term the state uses for the banned TTP —

Continued on Page 11

Engineers' strike affects Saudi-bound flights

By Mohammad Asghar

RAWALPINDI: Hundreds of air travellers were stranded at three major airports on Monday night due to a strike by aircraft engineers, which delayed at least six flights of the national flag carrier.

Similar delays occurred at nearly all major airports in last two months due to engineers' protest seeking pay hike and other issues.

According to sources, hundreds of Umrah pilgrims were stranded at the Islamabad, Lahore and Karachi airports due to the delay in PIA flights scheduled for Saudi Arabia.

A spokesman for PIA said the Society of Aircraft Engineers had no legal status and alleged that the main aim of this movement was to sabotage PIA's privatisation, which was in its final stages.

He warned that the Essential Services Act was in force in PIA under which strikes or abandonment of work was a legal offence. "All elements involved in or supporting such actions as part of a conspiracy will face legal action," he warned, adding that the management was obtaining alternative engineering services from other airlines to resume operations.

ON OTHER PAGES

Court seeks to enforce smog hours

The Lahore High Court has expressed displeasure over the government's failure to enforce restaurant closing hours and summoned Lahore DC to appear in person on Tuesday. During hearing of related petitions, Justice Shahid Karim questioned whether 'smog guns' serve any useful purpose. He voiced concern over rising air pollution, questioning the efficacy of the steps taken by the government.
Page 2

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